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PSC 387.01: Legislative Politics

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Legislative Politics
University of Montana
Political Science 387
MWF 11:10 – 12:00; LA 337
Fall 2008

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Office Hours: MW, 12-1

Course Description

This course examines the United States Congress. We will study Congress' original framework, its historic development, and the basic elements of legislative structure and behavior—individual members, committees, parties—while noting the differences between the House and Senate. In addition, we will pay close attention to this fall's congressional elections.

Required Texts and Other Readings

The following books are available at the University Bookstore:

- Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, and Frances E. Lee, *Congress and Its Members* 11th ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 2007).
- Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *The Broken Branch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

New York Times. The *Times* provides special low rates to students. For full details and to subscribe please visit: www.nytimes.com/student. Order a weekday (Monday-Friday) subscription beginning on August 25 and ending on December 5. You can arrange to pick up your paper each day on campus or to have your paper delivered to your home. Students are required to read daily stories about Congress, its members, and this fall's congressional elections. The exams will cover these current events.

Most other readings can be accessed using the listed internet addresses. Nelson Polsby's article can be found on the course's Blackboard page.

The instructor reserves the right to add, delete, or alter course readings as needed.

Requirements and Grading

Exam 1:	20%
Exam 2:	20%
Paper:	20%

Final Exam: 20%
Participation: 20%

Exams: Exams 1 and 2 will be administered in class on Friday, September 26 and Friday, November 7. The Final Exam will be held from 8:00 – 10:00 on Friday, December 12. Exams will include combination of multiple choice, identification, and short answer questions. Makeup exams will only be permitted if I have been notified *prior* to the missed exam and only if I agree that the absence was necessitated by a serious, documented emergency. Check your calendar now to make sure you do not have anything that conflicts with the exams.

Paper: You will follow a competitive U.S. House or Senate election throughout the semester. Based on this research, your task will be to analyze the election and its outcome in a 5 page, double-spaced paper with 1-inch margins and standard 12 point font. More information about the papers will be given in class. Papers are due on Friday, December 5 at 5:00. Extensions will be available only for illness or serious family circumstance, and then only with *advance* permission. Papers will be marked down half a letter grade for each day they are late.

Participation: Much of our time will be spent discussing the course readings in a seminar-style. Consequently, both quantity and quality of class participation will be very important. In addition, each student will give two formal 5 to 10 minute class presentations on the competitive U.S. House or Senate election s/he is following and writing a paper on. The first presentation will occur before the election and should be a primer on the race. The second presentation will be a post-election analysis. Handouts or other visual aids are encouraged. Further details about the presentations will be provided in class.

Grades: Grades will be assigned according to the following percentages:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89.9	C+ 77-79.9	D+ 67-69.9	below 60 F
A- 90-92.9	B 83-86.9	C 73-76.9	D 63-66.9	
	B- 80-82.9	C- 70-72.9	D- 60-62.9	

**** All three exams and the paper must be completed in order to pass the course.****

Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available online at <http://life.umd.edu/SA/documents/fromWeb/StudentConductCode1.pdf>. I take academic honesty very seriously, and will do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

Social Sciences General Education Requirement

In order for this course to satisfy your University of Montana General Education Distributional Requirement in the Social Sciences, you must take the course for a letter grade, and freshmen, sophomores, and other students governed by the 2005-2006 *Catalog* or more recent catalogs must earn a C– or better.

DSS Students

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide me with a letter of approval for accommodations at least one week prior to the first exam. DSS is in Lommasson Center 154.

Class Schedule

Week 1, Aug. 25 – 27: Introduction; NO CLASS MEETINGS – Professor Saldin will be at the Democratic National Convention mentoring college students earning credit for internships through the Washington, D.C.-based Washington Center. Class meetings will begin on Wednesday, Sept. 3. However, you are still responsible for the following assignments:

- A) Visit the Crystal Ball website (<http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/>) maintained by Professor Larry Sabato at the University of Virginia. Read his analysis of the upcoming congressional elections by clicking on “Senate ‘08” and “House ‘08.” In each section, click on and read “latest article.”
- B) Watch coverage of the Democratic National Convention. All major networks and cable news channels will have live coverage each evening Monday through Thursday.

Week 2, Sept. 3 – 5: Founding Principles

- A) US Constitution, Article I
<http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.overview.html>
- B) Federalist Papers: 10, 62, 63 <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm>
- C) John Dillin, “To the Founders, Congress was King,” *Christian Science Monitor* (Jan. 20, 2005) <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0120/p01s02-uspo.html>
- D) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 1
- E) Watch coverage of the Republican National Convention. All major networks and cable news channels will have live coverage each evening Monday through Thursday.

Week 3, Sept. 8 – 12: Congress’ Development

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 2

- B) Nelson W. Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives" (Blackboard)

Week 4, Sept. 22 – 26: From Candidate to Member

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 3-5

*****Exam #1: Friday, September 26*****

This exam will cover everything through (i.e., including this week's readings.

Week 5, Sept. 29 – Oct. 3: Political Parties and Leaders in Congress

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 6
B) William F. Connelly Jr., "Wall vs. Wave?" *The Forum* 4 (2006), at:
<http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol4/iss3/art3>
C) Elsa Walsh, "Minority Retort" (Harry Reid profile), *The New Yorker*, August 8, 2005,
at http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/050808fa_fact

Week 6, Oct. 6 – Oct. 10: Congress as a (Mal?)Functioning Institution

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 7-9

Week 7, Oct. 13 – Oct. 17: Congress and the President

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 10-11

Week 8, Oct. 20 – Oct. 24: Congress, the Courts and Interest Groups

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 12-13

Week 9, Oct. 27 – Oct. 31: Congress and Domestic Policy Making

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 14
B) Anthony Downs, "Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue-Attention Cycle," *The Public Interest* 28 (Summer 1972), 38-50, at:
<http://www.anthonydowns.com/upanddown.htm>

Week 10, Nov. 3 – Nov. 7: Congress and Foreign Policy

- A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 15

*****Exam #2: Friday, November 7*****

This exam will cover everything since Exam #1, including this week's material.

Week 11, Nov. 10 – Nov. 14: A Broken Branch? Part I

A) *The Broken Branch*, Chapters 1-3

Week 12, Nov. 17 – Nov. 21: A Broken Branch? Part II

A) *The Broken Branch*, Chapters 4-5

Week 13, Nov. 24: Reforming Congress

A) *The Broken Branch*, Chapters 6-7

Week 14, Dec. 1 – Dec. 5: Conclusions

*****Paper due Friday, December 5 by 5:00*****

A) *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 16

FINAL EXAM: 8:00 – 10:00 on Friday, December 12